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## COLLECTED ESSAYS





COLLECTED  
ESSAYS PAPERS &c.  
*of*  
ROBERT BRIDGES

*Oxford University Press*  
HUMPHREY MILFORD  
LONDON

*Second Impression*  
*First edition October 1927*

*Printed in Great Britain*

## PREFACE

THOSE who wish to read this Essay will find no hindrance in the unusual appearance of some of the words: others to whom (as now to myself) the experiments are of more interest than the matter will look for some explanation.

The general purpose of the series of pamphlets (of which this is the first) is to deal in a practical manner with the problem of our English spelling by furnishing the *desiderata*, beginning with the most evident and most easily supplied. Gradual introduction of the novelties will ease the reader's difficulties, and it is expected that this first instalment will cause him no trouble at all.

### VOWELS

The vowel which calls for first attention is the diphthongal sound in the words *eye* and *right*. In our present spelling it has all manner of forms, e.g. I, ic, ie, ei, y, ye, y-e, i-e, ig, igh, eigh, uy, ay, ai, ey, eye, as in the words *I* (the pronoun), *indictment*, *tie*, *eider*, *fly*, *dye*, *style*, *tile*, *sign*, *sigh*, *height*, *buy*, *ay*, *aisle*, *eying*, *eye*.

For this sound, wherever it occurs, a new sym-

bol *ġ* is used: the form devised allows the mute *g* which often follows it (as in *might, night, etc.*) to be suggested without being written.

The vowel *A* represents four common sounds, as in *father, slave, hat, and all*. We have begun by differentiating the first of these, the true broad *a* of *father*, from the others, which for the present are not distinguished among themselves.

### CONSONANTS

*G* represents three different sounds, as in *garden, gentle, and thing*. The first two of these, the 'hard' and 'soft' *g*, are here differentiated by the simple device of specializing two familiar forms of the printed letter.

Note that mute *g* is not meddled with and for the present (where it does not follow the new symbol *ġ* which eases its omission) is printed with the guttural *g*, the lost sound of which it represents.

The third use of *g* is when it is abused to denote the modification of *n*, as in the common suffix *ing*, in which there is no true *g*. This modified *n* is represented by a 'ligature' *ñ*, which is widely used and is common in free handwriting.

### SPELLING

There is little deviation from common spell

ings: but the mute final *e* is omitted in all words where it only suggests wrong pronunciation: thus we print *hav* and *liv*, distinguishing *liv* from *live*; and this applies to the frequent suffix *ite* when the *i* is shortened; compare *finite* and *definit*; but this convenience cannot be extended to a syllable which has a wrong vowel, and can be recognized only as a whole, as *love*.

The reader must make allowance for typographical difficulties. Though the italic, which was offer'd for this task, has the advantage of suggesting the freedom which handwriting allows, it does not, so easily as roman, admit the best forms of new letters. If our experiments should continue, we hope to improve the shapes with which we are at the outset obliged to content ourselves. At present the capitals are unchanged, and quotations given in original spelling.

The author and printers have to thank Mr. Stanley Morison and the Lanston Monotype Corporation for their kind assistance in designing and cutting the new symbols.

R. B.



I  
THE INFLUENCE  
OF THE AUDIENCE ON  
SHAKESPEARE'S  
DRAMA



FIRST PRINTED

*Shakespeare: Stratford Edition. Vol. 10*  
1907

REPRINTED

*privately in America for Stanley Morison*  
1926

Book both my wilfulness and errors down  
And on just proof surmise accumulate

*IF fault-finding were good criticism, it would be easy to criticise Shakespeare well; for his faults are like the prickles on a rose-bush: and what correlation between thorns and flowers? However, when I promis'd a friend to try and put into words the judgment which he supposed that years had matured in me, I was encouraged by the belief that there was a method of fault-finding which offer'd a sound basis for criticism, and might help to resolve some disputes. The appeal of poetry is primarily to the emotions and feelings: and since one can, without fear of intellectual disqualification, separate what one dislikes from what one likes, this first step may, even with Shakespeare, be taken in absolute security: and I thought that it started in a definite direction. Just as a chemist, who has some complicated mixture to analyse, will begin by treating the unknown compound with a simple reagent, and thereby find a precipitate which will serve him as basis and clue to further examination, so I would begin by separating from Shakespeare's work the matters that most offend my simple feelings, and by the examination of the*

nature and cause of these offences find a clue to further procedure. Having thus indicated the logic which will govern the following essay, I devote my space to the illustration rather than to the process of the argument.

The first things which such an appeal to our instinctive feelings will unhesitatingly cast out, will be the bad jokes and obscenities; and the magnitude of these is of logical importance. As for the mere foolish verbal trifling, even if full allowance be made for Tudor fashions of speech, it shows Shakespeare's desire to please a part of his audience with whom we have little sympathy, and proves that he did not aim at maintaining all parts of his work at a high level. As for the second item, the same judgment is inevitable: but he who reads for his pleasure will be unaware of the extreme badness of passages which he has always disregarded or omitted. The fault is chiefly in the earlier plays, and the history is generally free from it, but the women are tainted, and it is seldom entirely absent. In Shakespeare's work we cannot wholly account for it by any theory that does not embrace the supposition that he was making concession to the most vulgar stratum of his audience, and had acquired a habit<sup>1</sup> of so doing: and

<sup>1</sup>Thus, even in the *TEMPEST*, when Prospero, narrating to his daughter the story of the usurpation of his dukedom by Antonio, says, 'Tell

*this supposition is confirm'd by the speech of Hamlet to the players, where Shakespeare has put his own criticism into Hamlet's mouth.<sup>1</sup> He complains that the play in which the speech of Æneas occurs, and which he is commending, did not run more than one night, because it did not please the million; and that the million did not relish it, because it was unseason'd with their common spice. Without pressing Shakespeare's apology beyond its necessary meaning, it is a confession that he had himself deliberately play'd false to his own artistic ideals for the sake of gratifying his audience. Now this is just the piece of knowledge which we require, and it conveys the inference that*

*me if this might be a brother,' Miranda, who is fifteen years old, and has been brought up on the island, wanders to the notion of her grandmother's possible adultery in a reply which is out of character, and untrue to the situation. This was a CLICHÉ of the time, and may be mark'd 'PASSIM' in Shakespeare. It was absolutely without significance, and thrust in wherever a fool might expect it.*

<sup>1</sup>HAMLET, II. 2, 'I heard thee speak me a speech once,' &c. See SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY, by A. C. Bradley, Macmillan, 1905 (second edition)—a book which I mention with enthusiastic admiration. On p. 413, note F, Mr. Bradley examines this passage fully, and his general conclusions seem to me just. But the attitude of Polonius ('He's for a jig') cannot strictly be refer'd to the theatre; for it is evoked by the long recitation off the stage; and again it must be remember'd that whatever Shakespeare says here about style has to be dated.

*Shakespeare would have met the taste of his audience in other matters also—as, indeed, is implied in what he says about style and honest method, and by his praise of the speech—I should therefore be prepared to find him disregarding other artistic proprieties for the sake of dramatic effect.*

*Hence it would appear that a knowledge of Shakespeare's audience would be the best key to many difficulties; and if we could have been present at a first performance of his plays, to witness what parts of them were applauded, and what parts were not duly appreciated, we should understand why they were written as they are. But though this is denied to us, we may with all confidence reverse the experiment wherever possible, and argue that certain scenes which offend our feelings, so that we cannot endure to see them in representation—for instance, the murder of Macduff's child, the blinding of Gloucester, 'the piteous moane that Rutland made,'—did not offend Shakespeare's audience: and indeed if such exhibitions were comfortably tolerated, they were demanded of a dramatist who would fully arouse the feelings. These examples alone assure us that Shakespeare had to reckon with an audience far blunter in feeling than he would find today.*

*And this provides an ample account of the next fault*

that offends my feelings, that is what may be called brutality, which, though often mingled with the indelicacy already spoken of, must be distinguish'd from it. It is essentially an error of manners, an unnecessary rudeness, reaching sometimes to sheer brutality in the dialogue. From the unimportant but self-damaging rudeness of Valenti<sup>n</sup>e to Thurio in the TWO GENTLEMEN,—how much better courtesy would have been!—to the extravagant grossness of Leontes' language to Hermione, there is every grade. Even in the TEMPEST Gonzalo is allow'd to introduce himself with a stale jest, that involves him in his companions' vilification of the honest boatswain; and in proximity to Prospero's romantic cell there is a 'filthy mantled poole' which is the occasion of a disgusting utterance in the mouth of the delicate Ariel: for I must extend my objection to this kind of coarseness.

How essential good manners are to dramatic art, supposing a refined audience, needs no illustration: if a son should speak one rude word to his father, he may forfeit all esteem. The predicament cannot be put better than Shakespeare has worded it, 'Defect of Manners, . . . The least of which . . . Loseth mens hearts, and leaues behinde a stayne Vpon the beautie of all parts besides': and yet he often disregards the propriety. The coarse terms in

*which Claudio repudiates Hero enfeeble the plot of MUCH ADO; and Capulet's language to Juliet, being enough to provoke and justify her running away, betrays the open possibility of her escape. But if the audience enjoy'd realistic horror, it is only in keeping that the dialogue should be pitch'd in extravagant tones; and they were well accusom'd to the indulgence.*

*No man can assert of any one of the actual conditions under which Shakespeare produced his work, that it was dispensable: but neither should one say that it was an advantage to hav to wr̄ite for a public of 'īron nerves'. These īron nerves were no part of Shakespeare's constitution; and to welcome thus the brutality in his work implies the belief that if his audience had been more l̄ike himself, and more capable of understandin̄ his best, he would not then hav written so well. Insensibility is not incompatible with bravery, and in semi-barbarous natures may be even a part of it, but it is as cognate with fear and cowardice. To order a fellow-creature to be burn'd alive in one's presence argues īron nerves, and the people of the sixteenth century bein̄ possess'd of this sort of stupidity, Shakespeare knew that he must reckon with it. In his RICHARD II, York's speech, which begins 'As in a Theater the eyes of men', takes its metaphors from the*

theatre, and these words occur, 'That had not God, for some strong purpose, steel'd The hearts of men' (here are the iron nerves), 'they must perforce haue melted, And Barbarisme it selfe haue pittied him.' Realise that this was spoken on Shakespeare's stage by one of his actors to his audience, and it is incredible that the rebuke, or appeal, or allusion, however we may interpret it, should not be intended. I fancy an objector here urging that Falstaff is in some measure indebted to the very influence that I am deploring; and the scenes in which he appears offer examples of concession: but although we cannot imagine that inimitable ruffian different from what he is, was, and ever will be, we cannot therefore assert that Shakespeare could not hav made him as well, without such disgusting detail; in which case he would hav been even better; in any case he would be willingly accorded exceptional licence.

Next among the things condemn'd by instinctiv judgment, I will name the readiness with which offences of the first rank are sometimes overlook'd and pardon'd. Valentine's reconciliation with Proteus, and the pardon of Angelo, will hardly find an advocate. What justification I hav met with has been that this easy forgiveness was due to Shakespeare's great gentleness of mind, and was an idiosyncrasy in him; and passages are collected to illus-



trate it.<sup>1</sup> One must not overlook that Shakespeare required repentance before pardon: yet this off-hand repentance is unsatisfying. The offence in both the above cases denotes a vicious mind, and the mere disavowal of a criminal attempt that has not succeeded offers no trustworthy guaranty of future behaviour, which is what we, with our interest in the persons of the drama, immediately demand—‘the offender’s sorrow lends but weak relief’. But whether Shakespeare had, or had not, this view of the duty of all men to forgive all injuries on the first offer of repentance, yet such an extreme of gentleness cannot be attributed to his audience, and the appeal to such a disposition in them would have fail’d. If they could forgive Proteus and Angelo, it would be on the ground of their own indifference to the crimes, and because of a moral bluntness which did not discriminate; and my explanation would be that Shakespeare took advantage of this, and where his plot demanded a difficult reconciliation, he assumed its possibility, and accomplish’d it by a bold stroke, which any manœuvring would have frustrated. One may grant also that if his audience look’d for an extra-brutality of conduct, it was only reasonable in them not to

<sup>1</sup> And thus the case of Proteus might possibly be the contemporary expression of the actual experience in Sonnet XL, &c. And remember the last scene of the TEMPEST, line 131, &c.

*insist on its punishment. Some critics argue that the end of the TWO GENTLEMEN must have been tamper'd with; but the end of the WINTER'S TALE, which I shall notice later, is worse, and will, with other instances, corroborate the solution here proposed: and if that be agreed on, we have pass'd away from mere concession to the audience, and are come to discover Shakespeare taking advantage of their stupidity, and admitting inconsistencies or impossible situations for the sake of dramatic effect or convenience, where he knew that the liberty would be well tolerated. We are at the same time passing from matters which we decide unhesitatingly by our feelings, to matters wherein the appeal, however aroused, is to the reason. As an example of this class, I will first examine what seems to me inconsistency<sup>1</sup> in the character of Angelo in MEASURE FOR MEASURE.*

*Angelo, as introduced to us, is not a hypocrite, meaning by that term an unprincipled man who wears a mask. He is rather a Pharisee, a hard, cold, austere professor of vir-*

<sup>1</sup>Consistency is a term which, when used of character, needs definition; and though it can hardly be misunderstood in this place, I will here state that what I mean by it is merely that a character should 'hang together'. For instance, alternating moods might be part of a consistent character; but if contrarious moods are push'd far and not reasonably motiv'd, then the personality is dissociated, and becomes a pathological study which cannot hold our respect.

*tue, with an introspectiv, logical mind of considerable intelligence and ambition. His most mark'd and consistently maintain'd characteristics are heartlessness and over-regard for his reputation: he is therefore unholy, and yet he deems himself a saint: he is consequently a self-deceiver, and presumably a sincere one. He sets out on his main course in the drama stiff with the pride and self-confidence of his saintly reputation; then meetin, with a strange experience, which somethin, hitherto unsuspected or repress'd within him converts into a temptation, he commits horrible crimes. His fall works his salvation, for he is thereby undeceived and, knowin, himself, repents, and is pardon'd, and, we suppose, reform'd.*

*Further we learn that five years before the time of the events in the play, he had courted and won the love of a lady without lovin, her, though it is possible that he persuaded himself that he loved: but his love-vows had been only the formal procedure towards a desirable marriage, for when her dowry was lost, they went to the winds, and he saved appearances by defamin, her character.<sup>1</sup> That this old*

<sup>1</sup>*That Angelo's calumnies of Mariana were maliciously invented is implied in the structure of the plot. Since, if he had honestly doubted of her virtue, whether rightly or wrongly, he is then free in so far from reproach, and the motiv for the introduction of Mariana's dowry is lost: the point*

scandal obtains but little attention in the play does not lessen its enormity; and, making all allowance for self-deception, it is almost irreconcilable with sincerity of purpose.

His character, however, as introduced, is with this exception maintain'd till the end of his first interview with Isabella; after which he is, in a few hours, completely changed from a high-principled, stoical self-deceiver, to a licentious hypocrit trafficking with crime. ✓

The situation might be satisfg'd either with an unprincipled or with a passionate man. Angelo is neither: there is no passion in his calculating lust. He seems to have been purposely constructed incapable of the required reaction. His temperament does not, I think, tally with the notion of the sudden outburst of an uncontrollable animal instinct which had been artificially repress'd. Nor would the security of irresponsible power, which tempts some men to luxury, have undermined his motives for virtue, drawn as they were from public repute and self-esteem, which his promotion would heighten. His contact with Isabella one would think to be just the experience likely to evoke his better nature. Again his self-knowledge began with his

of it being to balance Angelo's wrong against Claudio's. They each avoid a legal marriage for fear of a money-loss, and thus Angelo condemns Claudio for a fault similar to his own.

temptation, and was complete at his fall: yet this unmelting man shows no remorse until he is publicly discover'd. He is now just like Borachio: and how should the disgrace of exposure remodel such a villain in fifteen minutes?

Reminded, as we are at this juncture, of his conduct to Mariana, we believe that he has been a solid hypocrit all along; that, having no virtue to fall from, he never fell; that the spiritual conflict of his 'temptation' could not have occur'd: and, as there was nothing in his first character to respond to the call to crime, so now, in the revelation of his second phase, there is—except his demoniacal lust for Isabella,—nothing left of him to be pardon'd and married to Mariana.

This drama was written in the light of Shakespeare's attainment, and if he had left not a record beside, we should know him from Isabella's three great scenes to have been by far the most gifted dramatist of all time. Even the short scene between the Duke and Julietta,—where the Duke, graciously playing the confessor's role, finds himself at every professional move baffled and checkmated by the briefest possible replies of a loving, modest, and true heart, till he is rebuff'd into a Christ-like sympathy,—appears to me a masterpiece which in its kind no other dramatist can have equal'd. How strange then is this

*blurr'd outline of Angelo, and how incomprehensible the neglect of Isabella at the close, when her brother, whom she thought worse than dead, is restored to her. The actress is not denied a fine opportunity, but the situation passes without a word, and it must be concluded that the audience took no interest in Isabella's religious character: reserved for the first prize in the stage-marriages she has to stand up with the sinners and patiently endure the exposure and torment of the theatrical suspense and display, which the good Duke has devised to wind up the drama: and in order to lighten the elaborate finale Shakespeare associates with him the worthless profligate, Lucio; who, if he amused the audience by his impertinent intrusion half as much as he degrades the already difficult situation, must have been a great success. What better illustration could we have of Hamlet's speech to the players?*

*There is in Macbeth the same kind of inconsistency as in Angelo. That it is less obvious is partly due to our personal remoteness from bloody ambition, and partly to its being overshadow'd by the darker mysteries of the play, but partly also because of the means devised to conceal it. The interest in the tragedy of MACBETH is the perpetration of crime by a man whose magnificent qualities of mind, extreme courage, and poetic imagination, raise the*

villainies above common meanness, and giv occasion for a superhuman conflict of images and ideas. Now though critics hav explain'd that Macbeth liv'd in a world of material considerations, while his morality was merely imaginativ (I wonder whether this divorce of his imagination from his ambition may not weaken the latter as a motiv), yet the commonsense objection that such a man would not hav committed such actions is strong and must be met. How, then, does Shakespeare meet it? If he had had any plain psychological conception, we should expect the drama to reveal it; but his method here is not so much to reveal as to confuse. Judging from the text, he does not wish us to be clearly determin'd as to whether Macbeth's ambition had preconceived and decided on the murder of Duncan; or whether the idea was chiefly imposed upon him by a supernatural devilry; or whether he was mainly urged to it by his wife, and was infected and led by her. We may combine the two latter motifs, and see hell and home leagued against him: the difficulty lies in the unknown quantity of the first motiv, his predisposition; which, if it be allow'd to be only in the exact balance required for these other agencies to carry it, is still contradictory to the picture of nobility impress'd on us by Shakespeare, and essential to his drama. The case may be

put baldly thus: it would not be untrue to the facts<sup>1</sup> as presented by Shakespeare, to precede the drama with a scene in which Macbeth and Lady Macbeth should in Machiavellian composure deliberate together upon the murder of Duncan: but plainly such a scene would destroy the drama.

Now this veil'd confusion of motif is so well managed that it must be recognised as a device intended to escape observation. That the main conception of the play is magnificent is amply proved by the effects obtain'd; but they are none the less procured by a deception, a liberty of treatment or a 'dishonesty', which is purposely blurr'd. The naturalness is merely this, that in nature we cannot weigh or know all the motives or springs of action, and therefore we are not shock'd at not being able to understand Macbeth; the difficulty indeed is one main source of our pleasure, and is intended to be so: but this is not nature, in the sense of being susceptible of the same analysis as that by which the assumptions of science would investigate nature.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>What may be call'd the facts are collected by Mr. Bradley, op. cit., p. 480, Note CC. His admirable account of this play relieves me of what compunction I must feel for mine.

<sup>2</sup>I should opine that it was this 'confusion' quite as much as the 'fine excess' which misled the general critical judgment of Hume's logical and intuitive mind. Hume's overstatement must be attributed to the taste of his time; in which he was too deeply engaged to be able to recognise its



The interest in a Shakespearean tragedy lies chiefly in the hero's conduct, and is greater as his conduct surprises while it satisfies: and from the constitution of things it is difficult to imagin a character or personality whose actions shall be at once consistent and surprising. The extreme of virtue may surprise; but Shakespeare never chose to depict men of whom the world was not worthy. Then there is the extreme of vice; and Shakespeare has surprised us with this in Iago and others; and he has surprised us, successfully or not, with monstrous forms of special qualities in Tîmon and in Coriolanus: but to sustain surprise in a worthy hero he has sometimes had recourse to devices which are intended to baulk analysis. In order to attain the surprising, he will risk, or even sacrifice, the logical and consistent; and as such a flaw, if it were perceived, must ruin the interest, he is ready with abundant means to obscure the inconsistency. It seems to me that one method was to take advantage of uncertainty or confusion in motives or matters of fact lying partly or wholly outside the drama, which, if they were clearly conceived as determin'd one way or another would confine the action within lesser lines. Some matter which, as it appears to limitations. But we must ask why Hume could not perceive what Shakespeare's INSIGHT was greater than his own.

*us, might hav happen'd as well one way as another, is purposely left half-determin'd: we are led to suppose that it happen'd one way, and if we are disturb'd by conduct inconsistent with that surmise, we can shift our surmise, but only to be encounter'd bȳ actions which drive us back upon it, or suggest another explanation. The pleasure attendinȳ our surprisȳ gratifies us, and our critical faculty is quieted bȳ the reflection that there must be a solution, and that it is natural enough that we should not hit upon it at once. This attitude of mind is further assured bȳ the convincinȳ verisimilitude and richness of Shakespeare's detail, as well as bȳ the appearance of necessity which accompanies the presentation of action.*

*Some incongruity may well occur accidentally; and if extra-scenic it may be difficult to avoid, and is to be found, I suppose, in the most classical Greek drama; but it is easy to see how it was forecast in the bare skeleton of such plays as the MACBETH, and MEASURE FOR MEASURE. Havinȳ found a story the actions of which were suitable, Shakespeare adopted them very much as they were, but remade the character of the actor. In the original story the actor would be known and judged bȳ his actions: this Shakespeare reverses bȳ first introducinȳ his hero as a man superior to his actions; his art beinȳ to*

*create a kind of contrast between the two, which has, of course, no existence in the original tale; and his success depends on the power and skill with which this character is chosen and enforced upon the audience; for it is when their minds are preoccupy'd with his personality that the actions follow as unquestionable realities, and, in the MACBETH, even pre-ordain'd and prophesj'd.*

*Not that there is anything illegitimate or even peculiar in this use of contrast: indeed if a worthy hero is to behave badly, he must be better than his actions, for he cannot be either equal or worse. And since the terms whereby we describe character are undefin'd, each several case must be consider'd on its own merits: there is no rule from which anything can be deduced beyond probabilities; and it is not the probable, but the exceptional, that is desir'd. Only it cannot be conceded that any character is capable of any action: there is a limit, and Shakespeare seems to delight in raiding across it. Consider the 'opportunity' in the MACBETH. The hero's character having been elevated above his actions, their criminality is also increased; for in the history Macbeth kills Duncan in a soldier-like manner. But Shakespeare, choosing that Duncan shall be secretly murder'd, makes Lady Macbeth represent the advent of Duncan to their castle as a favour-*

able opportunity; and he knows that the audience, blinded by the material juxtaposition, will regard it as such. Now to propose this dastardly violation of honour to Macbeth would, most probably, have stimulated his nobility and scared him from the crime however fully he might have been predetermin'd on it: yet Shakespeare, fortifying the position by Lady Macbeth's ambition and will, ventures to exhibit his hero as truly possess'd by the proper shame and horror, but fascinated by the presentation which is deluding the audience.

It seems indeed of the very essence of Shakespeare's later art to invent such characters as must give rise to difficulties. For instance, I am distress'd in the CYMBELINE by the contact of Iachimo with Imogen, and its great unpleasantness is evidently due to the exquisite beauty of Shakespeare's creation. He has made a creature of such wonderful delicacy that when she is inveigled into the gross Italian story, the detail of it appears unfit to be associated with her: and I feel assured that if Shakespeare had been favour'd with an audience capable of appreciating Imogen, he would skilfully have transform'd some matters to suit her, nor have thought to amuse us by making her mistake the beheaded Cloten for Posthumus. That he wrote it as he did is a grossness which we must swallow,

*and not a refined subtlety to which any clever exposition can reconcile us.*

*Shakespeare's dazzling skill in qualifying and harmonising cannot wholly blind us to the anomalies which his energetic treatment entails. I suppose that the plays of HENRY IV may be his greatest feat of this kind: and though I feel that should I once allow Falstaff to come fooling into my essay, I should never have done, I will venture with him so far as to say that his desecration of Hotspur's body, and the Prince's connivance in his contemptible pretence to have killed him appear to me to be sheer farce. I believe that he came very near to outwitting his creator; and in the sudden dismissal 'I know thee not, old man,' I hear rather the triumphant farewell of Shakespeare than the angelic judgment of Henry.*

*Returning now to where the question of contrast provoked these illustrations:—The story being chosen and the characters decided on, Shakespeare's imagination overrode difficulties foreseen and unforeseen, so as often to outrival nature. And to enrich his picture he will transplant incidents detach'd from the original story, which determine, arbitrarily it would seem, quite important matters, being borrow'd without their causes, as we saw the hero's actions were taken without his character. For instance, in the*

MERCHANT OF VENICE, the love of Antonio for Bassanio, which in the absence of explanation appears romantic, is merely carried over without its motiv from the old story, in which Antonio is Bassanio's godfather, and adopts him and loves him as his own son. Again, Antonio's melancholy with which Shakespeare opens his play so well, using it as an interesting attraction and another romantic trait,—very valuable as preparation for his conduct,—is develop'd from a hint in the novel, where Antonio is sad on account of Bassanio's ill-successes. And this is an example of the greater interest of such a mood when unaccounted for, since in the original story it is of no special value. And I may add that all that is unsatisfactory in the character of Bassanio is not to be father'd on any fancy of Shakespeare's genius to make him just as he is, for it was no more than his choice among the difficulties of recasting that old tale; which, though unfit for the stage, was very happily constructed. Portia was a sort of Circe, and Bassanio an adventurous dupe who won in the end.

It would seem from such instances that Shakespeare sometimes judged conduct to be dramatically more effective when not adequately motiv'd. In the WINTER'S TALE the jealousy of Leontes is senseless, whereas in the original story an adequate motiv is develop'd. It may be that

Shakespeare wish'd to portray this passion in odious nakedness without reason or rein, as might be proper in a low comedy, where its absurdity would be ridiculed away: but if so, his scheme was artistically as bad as any third-rate melodrama of today: the admixture of tragic incident creates a situation from which recovery is impossible; and it is certain that the spectators are not intended to realise the condition of affairs. In that fall and rise of the curtain it needs, one may say, even prolong'd meditation to imagine the passage of sixteen tedious years, during all which time Leontes has to be pictured kneeling daily at his wife's cenotaph, while she, pretending that he has kill'd her, is living and hiding away from him at a friend's house in the same city. We are diverted and delighted by Autolycus and Perdita; our interests are magically shifted,—the relief of the contrast almost justifies the uncomfortable distress of the earlier acts,—and we are gratified to find Hermione alive at the end. But how are Leontes and Hermione to meet? It is a situation worthy of Labiche; yet we are expected both to take it seriously and to overlook it. When Hermione descends from the pedestal into her husband's arms, the impossibility of reconciliation is passed by in silence, and Leontes busies himself in finding a husband for the aged and unattractive Paulina.

And how easy it would have been to have provided a more reasonable ground for Othello's jealousy. If in the break of the second act his vessel had been delayed a week by the storm, those days of anxiety and officious consolation would have given the needed opportunity, and the time-contradictions might also have been avoided. The tragedy of OTHELLO is intolerably painful; and that not merely because we see Othello being grossly deceived, but because we are ourselves constrained to submit to palpable deception. The whole thing is impossible: it is just as Mr. Bradley points out:<sup>1</sup> Iago's calumnies postulate certain events; but if the time indispensable for those events had been allowed, then his incredible lies must have been exposed. As to Iago himself, it is very well for Shakespeare to say that there is no art to find the mind's construction in the face, but a man with a tincture of Iago's wickedness could not mix in the world without plentiful suspicion. The only disguise of his 'daily ugliness' would be extreme personal beauty, and that would not deceive all. It is common for unsophisticated people to be gifted with an intuitive perception of the broad distinctions of character from voice, manner, and facial expression, and when conduct belies these, they suspect its motive. Even if the Moor could

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., p. 423, Note 1.



not read a white face,—though then it is strange that he should have trusted himself so entirely to the alien,—yet Desdemona (whom we credit with unusual discernment in her appreciation of Othello) would have noted and shrunk from his inhumanity and restless *je*. Exasperation is the word that I should choose to express the state of feeling which the reading of the OTHELLO induces in me: and seeing how cleverly everything is calculated to this effect, I conclude that it was Shakespeare's intention, and that what so hurts me was only a pleasurable excitement to his audience, whose gratification was relied on to lull their criticism. What else can be the meaning of Emilia purloining the kerchief, and then being present at the enquiry concerning it? It may suit critics to say that she was naturally lacking in perception,<sup>1</sup> but she is not otherwise a

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Bradley, *op. cit.*, making a careful psychological analysis of the characters in the OTHELLO, says of Othello himself that he was 'not observant' (p. 189), and did not when married rely on such 'powers of perception' as he possessed. On p. 205 he attributes to Desdemona 'a certain want of perception'; and he calls Emilia 'blunt in perception' (p. 239). Brabantio had not been observant: therefore Roderigo as professional gull should be most valuable as a foil. Iago himself also caught the disease, and perished of 'failure in perception' (p. 236): indeed, but for Shakespeare's unusual contrivances, he would, so far as I can see, have gone clumsily to his inevitable destruction even earlier.

stupid woman, nor indeed was any intelligence needed: the point of her presence can only be to increase the tension of the spectators' anxiety: they expect her every moment to explain the mistake, and rescue Desdemona; yet she does not. I conclude that Shakespeare aim'd at exciting his audience to the limit of their endurance in the OTHELLO, as he terrifies in the MACBETH, harrows in the LEAR, and mystifies in the HAMLET.<sup>1</sup>

The play of HAMLET may finally be taken in illustration of this view of Shakespeare's method. Why has there been such question whether Hamlet was mad or only feining, unless it was Shakespeare's design to make and leave it doubtful?<sup>2</sup> and does not the hypothesis of such a

<sup>1</sup>As to the confusion of time in the plays, my limits forbid consideration of the liberties which Shakespeare takes with time, especially as these involve a question of stage construction. Since they must be of the nature of contradictions used for dramatic effect, they can be generally alleged in favour of my main contention.

<sup>2</sup>I find Mr. Bradley arguing against the notion that Shakespeare 'intended Hamlet to be unintelligible'. He writes, 'Now here, surely, we have confusion of mind', i.e. in the critics, not in Hamlet. 'The mysteriousness of life is one thing, the psychological unintelligibility of a dramatic character is quite another: and the second does not show the first, it shows only the . . . folly of the dramatist. If it did show the first, it would be easy to surpass Shakespeare in producing a sense of mystery: we should simply have to portray an absolutely nonsensical character.' This is clear enough,

design reconcile all? The limit of madness is indefinable: to feign madness is no presumption in favour of sanity, and might itself be a kind of madness: again, if the conscious simulation led to an unconscious habit of acting insanely, how would this differ from the first degree of true madness, except in the possession of a healthy will in the background which is precisely what Hamlet lack'd? Something of this sort would seem, from Hamlet's excuse to Laertes, to have been his own view of his case. If we must choose between sane and insane, then the better opinion of the two, namely, that Hamlet was never more than 'Covering Discretion with a Coat of Folly', makes him guilty of the murder of Guildenstern and Rosencrantz,—which, moreover, is like a madman's unscrupulous action, inconsiderately and cunningly perform'd, and boasted of in full imaginativ detail after;—his language to Ophelia has also to be excused, though that, even if it were unpa-

and if I do not agree, I see that Mr. Bradley can easily prove me to be mad. And yet, to put it generally, psychology has not yet made character always intelligible; and the terms by which it seeks to do so have no definite meaning. Besides, to draw a dramatic character purposely so as to elude analysis is not the same as to make a nonsensical one. To put it particularly, Mr. Bradley's position is this, that Hamlet, being distraught, must not in his distraction cross and recross some fix'd boundary on a psychological map. In this discussion madness must be consider'd as a functional derangement of the intellect.

rallel'd in Shakespeare, might possibly be defended as the extreme of self-repudiation in a proud and perhaps somewhat cruel nature safeguarding itself from reproach by making the assumed mask impossible to be mistaken for truth. Again, why are we forbidden to know anything concerning his earlier relations with Ophelia, how long he had loved her, and how deeply? Why is even the date of that strange letter hopelessly obscured, unless it were that any one definite determination of it would expose or create a contradiction?

There must be mistakes in Shakespeare's work, ignorances and oversights in the writing, as there are misprints, false copyings, and perhaps fusion of incompatible versions: but the class of contradictions and obscurities which I have been noticing can hardly be ascribed to unconscious error. Carelessness is the word sometimes used to account for them: but the only kind of carelessness which is possible implies intention; a paradox which a simple illustration may elucidate. When, in TWELFTH NIGHT, Malvolio picks up Maria's letter, he says, 'By my life this is my Ladies hand: these bee her very C's, her U's, and her T's, and thus makes shee her great P's.' Now in the superscription which he immediately reads, there is no C, nor any P, small or great. Shakespeare either observed this

discrepancy, or he did not observe it. If he observed it and let it stand, then it was not carelessness: and if he did not observe it, the reason was that he must hav acquired a purposeful intentional habit of disregarding such indifferent matters; and that is not carelessness. So for the contradictions which we hav found in his plays;—he had, as it were, a balance to maintain, and a fine sense of its equipoise: if one scale descends, he immediately throws something into the other, and though he may appear to be careless as to what he throws in, he only throws in such things as he knows he may be careless about. But an examination of those matters would tend to prove that he did not regard the reader as well as the audience of his plays.

This essay is little more than the contracted outline of a one-sided contention, but, though I cannot suppose that I hav avoided all error, I think that it fairly represents my opinions. How far it may convince critics and readers I cannot tell. Those who agree will easily draw some practical corollaries; one of which I think useful enough to be formulated, namely, that Shakespeare should not be put into the hands of the young without the warning that the foolish things in his plays were written to please the foolish, the filthy for the filthy, and the brutal for the brutal; and that, if out of veneration for his genius we are

*led to admire or even tolerate such things, we may be thereby not conforming ourselves to him, but only degrading ourselves to the level of his audience, and learning contamination from those wretched beings who can never be forgiven their share in preventing the greatest poet and dramatist of the world from being the best artist.*

*Omnes enim qui probari volunt, voluntatem eorum qui audiunt intuentur, ad eamque et ad eorum arbitrium et nutum totos se fingunt et accommodant.*

CICERO, ORATOR

*My project . . . was to please . . .  
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,  
Let your indulgence set me free.*

SHAKESPEARE, EPILOGUE TO TEMPEST

OXFORD  
PRINTED BY  
JOHN JOHNSON  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY  
PRESS













